

Congressman Phil Roe Cautions Tennesseans to Beware of a New Surge of Online Scams

WASHINGTON, DC

— Congressman Phil Roe (TN-1) warns Tennesseans to beware of a new surge of Internet scams that are targeting unsuspecting victims.

The Federal Trade Commission works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices and to provide information to help spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint, visit the FTC's online Complaint Assistant or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). The FTC enters complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to more than 1,500 civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

“The Internet has added the value of convenience and it provides a plethora of information at our virtual fingertips, but it's also made it easier for scammers, con artists, and other online miscreants to carry out their virtual crimes,” said Roe. “These scams can impact our real life finances, security, and peace of mind. That is why it is important to stay informed and be on the lookout for evolving Internet scams.

“If you or someone you know has been a victim of an online scam, please contact the FTC or my office.”

These Internet scams are constantly evolving, and here are the most common today.

Flu Scam: The FDA and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued an alert to consumers to be wary of Internet sites and other promotions for products that claim to diagnose, prevent, mitigate, treat or cure the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. Both agencies advised operators of such Websites to take prompt action to correct and/or remove promotions of these fraudulent products

or face enforcement action.

Home Business Scam: The home-based business opportunity sector has become a prime target for scammers in today's Internet world. Be wary of "high income" opportunities as well as those touting instant or quick earnings. Look for and verify company contact information. Test e-mail addresses and phone numbers for a response within 24 hours and always be able to speak to someone on the phone rather than relying strictly on e-mail communication. Watch out for outlandish claims (often in big, bold headlines) and don't put much stock in income testimonials. Check online forums on a particular business opportunity, and confirm the reliability of companies with the Better Business Bureau.

Stimulus Check Scams: E-mail scams referred to as "phishing" seek personal data and financial account information that enables another party to access your bank account or to engage in identity theft. The important thing to remember is that the Treasury Department, the IRS, your bank, and your credit card company----none of them---will call you up or email you for private account information. If you get an email or a phone call asking for bank account numbers, credit card numbers, or offering you economic stimulus money---report them. For more on stimulus check scams, go to www.recovery.gov.

Fraudulent Link Scams: Scams, in general, are the new malware delivery method. Social engineering is the norm. Falsifying a link is the hallmark of phishing scams, seeded downloader Trojans, and other web-based malware. And it's all trivially easy to do, using basic HTML.

Greeting Card Scams: Greeting card scams arrive in email pretending to be from a friend or family member. Clicking the link to view the card typically leads to a booby-trapped web page that downloads Trojans and other malicious software onto the systems of the unsuspecting.

Lottery Winning Scams: Lottery winner scams attempt to trick recipients into believing they have won large sums of cash, and then bilks them out of their own money in a similar fashion to the Nigerian 419 scam.

Jury Scam: Victims of the Jury Scam get an e-mail containing a fake subpoena ordering recipients to testify before a grand jury, complete with seemingly genuine details like your name, a case number and court seal. But the e-mails contain malware that can ruin a computer.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of an online scam, please contact the FTC at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) or my office at 202-225-6356.